

February 18, 2004: Religious Freedom Commission Cites Countries of Particular Concern Press Briefing

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM COMMISSION CITES COUNTRIES OF PARTICULAR CONCERN
FOREIGN PRESS CENTER BRIEFING BY U.S. COMMISSION ON INTERNATIONAL
RELIGIOUS FREEDOM
FEBRUARY 18, 2004

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, an independent nine-member advisory body established by Congress, is calling on the State Department to designate 11 countries as "countries of particular concern" because of "egregious, systematic, ongoing abuse of the right of religious freedom."

The countries are Burma, China, Eritrea, India, Iran, North Korea, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Turkmenistan and Vietnam, said Commission Chairman Michael Young during a briefing at the State Department's Foreign Press Center in Washington February 18.

The Commission believes that "the designation of these countries is one of the most important steps towards the advancement of human rights that the United States takes every year, and we have strongly urged the Department of State to name those particular countries," he said. He added, however, that there were some dissenting opinions within the Commission about India's designation.

The designation is usually made by the secretary of State some months after the Department releases its annual international religious freedom report.

"This designation does not necessarily mean that there would be sanctions against the country or any particular action," Young said. However, it requires "the special attention of the Secretary and his personal engagement" in working with the country to improve the state of religious liberties.

Young said "this is not the first time" the Commission has singled out these 11 countries as egregious violators of religious freedom, but the State Department "has not yet named Eritrea, India, Pakistan, Saudi

Arabia, or Turkmenistan in that regard." Asked why, Young said the Commission believes the State Department is "wrong. These [countries] should be designated."

"I'm sure there's different reasons that might be offered for each country," he added, suggesting that the journalists take it up with State Department spokesman Richard Boucher.

The Commission was created through the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998.

Following is a transcript of the briefing:

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THE U.S.
COMMISSION ON INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM'S RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE
DEPARTMENT OF STATE CONCERNING COUNTRIES OF PARTICULAR CONCERN

Michael Young, Chairman,
U.S. Commission
on International Religious Freedom

Foreign Press Center Briefing

Washington, DC

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1:00 p.m. EST

MR. DENIG: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the Washington Foreign Press Center.

As you know, the United States has always placed a great premium on religious freedom. It was certainly one of the main motivating reasons for many of the immigrants who came to our shores over the years.

For today's briefing, we have Michael Young, the Chairman of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. And as at least some of you know, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom is an independent commission established by Congress through the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998.

The Commission's responsibility is to conduct continuing independent reviews of violations of religious freedom wherever they might occur around the globe, and to provide advice to the President, the Secretary of State, and the Congress on these matters.

So we're very pleased to have the Chairman of this Commission, Mr. Michael Young, with us today. I might mention, by the way, that his daytime job is that of Dean of the Law School at George Washington University, so he is a real legal expert. He will brief us today on the topic of the U.S. Commission's recommendations to the Department of State concerning Countries of Particular Concern.

Chairman Young will have an opening statement to make, and after that will be glad to take your questions.

Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN YOUNG: Thank you. Good morning. I am Michael Young, Chairman of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. The Commission is an independent regulatory body, or an independent advisory body created by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998. It comprises nine members appointed in a bi-partisan fashion to examine the state of religious liberties around the world and provide recommendations to the Secretary of State, to the President, to the National Security Council and to the Congress about ways in which U.S. foreign policy can better advance the goal of religious liberties around the world.

Let me be also clear that when we speak of religious liberties around the world, we really speak not in terms of the particular U.S. pattern of religious liberties, but rather, religious liberties as defined in the international agreements -- the UN documents and the UN treaties -- and that is

what we specify.

The International Religious Freedom Act also requires the Secretary of State, who is the President's designee on these matters, to review this state of affairs around the world and to focus particularly on countries where there's egregious, systematic, ongoing abuse of the right of religious freedom, and to designate those countries, "Countries of Particular Concern," or what is sometimes referred to in the statute as CPCs.

That's an annual process the Secretary engages in. And those are countries that then, once designated, require the special attention of the Secretary and his personal engagement in examining ways in which the United States and that designated country can work together to better advance the cause of religious freedom. That is usually a designation made by the Secretary of State some months after the Department of State releases its annual International Religious Freedom Report.

After our Commission has examined these matters, over the past year we have concluded that 11 countries ought to be named and designated as Countries of Particular Concern. These include: Burma, The Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Eritrea, India, Pakistan, The People's Republic of China, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Turkmenistan, Vietnam and Iran.

In the case of India, some commissioners have dissented from the recommendation that India be so designated, and one commissioner, while not dissenting, has joined a separated opinion that would place India on a watch list as opposed to designating India as a Country of Particular Concern.

The State Department has named, in the past, some of those countries, but has not yet named Eritrea, India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, or Turkmenistan in that regard.

We believe that the designation of these countries is one of the most important steps towards the advancement of human rights that the United States takes every year, and we have strongly urged the Department of State to name those particular countries.

This designation does not necessarily mean that there would be sanctions against the country or any particular action, but it does require that the Secretary of State engage at the highest levels with that country and enter into an agreement that involves the articulation of specific steps that would be taken to improve the state of religious liberties in that particular country. We have urged Secretary Powell to engage these countries in as many ways as possible in order to advance the cause in that regard.

We've also made a series of very specific policy recommendations, which are available on our website, and available in the materials out in the lobby, regarding China, India, North Korea, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Turkmenistan and Vietnam. And we have encouraged the Secretary, as well as testified before Congress and encouraged the Congress, to give particular attention to the recommendations that we have met.

In March of 2003, the State Department designated Burma, China, Iran, Iraq, North Korea and Sudan as countries of particular concern. And it's our opinion that, with the exception of Iraq, nothing has changed for the better in these countries in a manner that would warrant their removal. I'd be happy to talk about each of those countries in turn, as well as the others that we've recommended as well.

So, with that, let me conclude my opening statement and invite questions, if I may, from the press.

MR. DENIG: Let me remind you to please use the microphone and introduce yourself and your news organization. Let's start right up front here, please.

QUESTION: KP Nayar, from The Telegraph Newspaper.

The Indian media has carried several stories since the letter was written to Secretary Powell, and the focus of these stories seems to be that the Commission is split almost down the middle on the issue of India. Do you share that assessment?

And also, what credibility or moral force does the recommendation to Secretary Powell have when you have dissented with it, the vice chair has dissented with it, the only Indian-American on the Commission has dissented, and someone respectable as the Archbishop of Denver has dissented? What credibility or moral force does the recommendation have when such eminent folk, eminent people, have dissented, almost half of the Commission?

MR. YOUNG: Well, I think the important thing to keep in mind is to not get lost in the statutory technicalities; that is to say, I think there is disagreement, respectful, but in my judgment, legitimate disagreement, among the commissioners with respect to whether India has risen to the level in terms of the problems there that had not been addressed

effectively to the statutory standard. The statutory standard is a serious and a high one: It's systematic, egregious, ongoing abuse.

Nevertheless, there is no disagreement on the Commission -- I think if you read both the position of the majority and the position of the minority, there is no disagreement that there are serious problems that haven't been addressed. There have been the fatal attacks against the Muslims and Christians, and they continue. The government has yet to address adequately the killing of the estimated 1-2,000 people in Gujarat in 2002. Several government officials from the ruling party, the BJP, have rather publicly allied themselves with Hindu extremists and the RSS whose members systematically employ hate speech against religious minorities and hate speech of the most violent kind, and have sought legislation to prohibit the religious conversion of the Dalits as well as others from Hinduism.

We all agree on that, and I think whatever debate there may be about the statutory definition of it, I think there is no disagreement on the part of the Commission that there are serious, unaddressed problems; that the government has not distanced itself from these extremist views and, in fact, to a disconcerting extent has allied itself with those.

So, from that perspective, I think one hopes that the Commission's recommendations, at least within the U.S. Government, will have some force.

There is legitimate disagreement on a variety of perspectives as to whether the statutory standard is met, but there is no disagreement that there are still serious, unaddressed problems.

MR. DENIG: All right. Let's take the gentleman in the blue shirt right there.

QUESTION: David Beasley with Radio Free Asia.

Can you comment on the state of religious freedom in China as it relates to Tibet and Xinjiang? I'm specifically thinking of the imprisonment of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche and the suspicious death of Khenpo Jigme Rinpoche, and in Xinjiang the continued imprisonment of Rabiye Kadir?

And given that the situation is so bad, do you think that further sanctions at this point would be appropriate?

MR. YOUNG: Well, let me take the first part of your question, then the second part.

The situation in China remains serious. Indeed, it remains dire, in our judgment. The government continues to have a deliberate policy of repression. And while there may be some threat of a separatist movement within the Xinjiang Province, in fact, that has been used excessively as the excuse to round up Uighur Muslims, and the arrest of Ms. Kadir seems to be a clear example of that. And that is all something that we have condemned before, condemn again. And the same is true in Tibet.

In Tibet, while there have been some restoration of monasteries; in fact, they have been restored largely as cultural artifacts. There remain severe limitations on the extent to which they can actually worship and engage in the full range of their worship activities in those.

There remain people under arrest: The Panchen Lama, The Designated One, has not been seen since, I believe, 1995, despite repeated attempts to locate him and to have the government to identify where he is. So those are all serious concerns.

There have been additional arrests in the main, in other parts of China, as well as closure of churches and repression and it is serious. It is not getting better in our judgment.

We have outlined some steps that we think the U.S. Government ought to take and ought to take quickly and ought to take decisively. Important among those are an expansion of the human rights dialogue, a human rights dialogue that has been suspended for some period of time. There ought to be more opportunity for human rights groups to visit all parts of China, including Tibet and Xinjiang. Our Commission, in fact, has attempted two trips to China within the last year. Both were thwarted because of unacceptable conditions that the Chinese Government put on.

We did go to China and we look forward to an opportunity to go into other parts -- excuse me, we did go to Hong Kong. We look forward to going to other parts of China as well when the Chinese Government lets us, but they should let us, and they should let all human rights groups go in freely and inspect.

And so those are the kinds of things that we think can start that sort of a focus on these issues in a way that would allow an expansion of human rights at

the same time trade and other things are being expanded so aggressively in China.

MR. DENIG: Okay. Let's go to the gentleman back there.

QUESTION: My name is Nezam Mahdawi from Al-Jazeera Channel. I'd like to ask you, is it the first time you add Saudi Arabia and Sudan to that list? And if yes, why this year? What's your concern in Saudi Arabia?

MR. YOUNG: Well, let me take Sudan first. It is indeed not the first year that we've added Sudan. Sudan has been on our list from the very beginning. It has been a humanitarian and human rights disaster in Sudan.

Happily, some of the recommendations we've made in terms of creating a specific, designated person in the U.S. Government who would work to engage the Sudanese Government at the highest levels in a peace process was a recommendation was accepted. Former Senator Jack Danforth was appointed. There has been progress. They appear to be on the verge of an agreement that, if that agreement is complied with, it could actually make an enormous difference.

We also had suggested that some aid be offered outside of Operation Lifeline Sudan, because it appeared there were ways in which that aid was being manipulated for political purposes. That also happened, which I think helped facilitate an agreement with respect to these other matters.

There's still much to be done and there's still many problems in Sudan. And until those are resolved and addressed, we don't feel it appropriate to take Sudan off the list. But it has been on our list for a long time. It has, in fact, been named as a Country of Particular Concern by the U.S. Government, as well. So Sudan is nothing new.

Neither is Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia, simply put, according to the U.S. State Department's own report -- not the report of our Commission, but the State Department's own report -- simply says that freedom of religion does not exist in Saudi Arabia. It's a simple, categorical statement, and that's how they open up their analysis.

And in our judgment, Saudi Arabia is a country with which we have close ties, and cooperation on these matters ought to be deeper, and this ought to be a more important focal point of that area of cooperation.

The Saudi Government has indicated that people may worship privately in a non-public way, but in fact, for a number of years people who tried to gather in their homes, in private, nevertheless were arrested, were deported. Those kinds of meetings were broken up. We have renewed promises from the Saudis. Those promises ought to be lived up to.

[There are] questions about the kinds of things being taught in Saudi schools, as well -- the textbooks and so forth. The Saudi Government says it has undertaken an examination of those and removed some of the more incendiary materials from that. We think that's a step in the right direction. But there needs to be a much broader expansion of the teaching of tolerance more generally.

Add to that the question of the Mutawa. They have acted in ways that the Saudi Government itself admits is inconsistent with the policies of the Saudi Government as well as inconsistent with the things Saudis have represented to the United States and to the international community at large.

The Mutawa should not have the authority, the breadth of leverage that they have in the system. That's something we've also urged against very strongly. And so Saudi Arabia is not a country that we're addressing for the first time. We recognize its peculiar and unique situation in the Muslim world, and its particular relationship to Islam; with all due respect to that, it has areas in which it has made representations, which it ought to be living up to.

MR. DENIG: All right. Let's go to the gentleman right there.

QUESTION: My name is Sridhar from The Hindu Newspaper of India.

Did you or any of the Commission members have an opportunity to sit down and talk with anybody from the Government of India? I know there was some controversy about it a year or two years back. I was wondering whether you were able to have the opportunity to sit and address these things with the government?

CHAIRMAN YOUNG: We have had a number of meetings with officials of the Indian Government, yes.

QUESTION: Here or in India?

CHAIRMAN YOUNG: Predominantly here.

Have we had anyone travel to India? We have not traveled to India.

QUESTION: No invitation?

CHAIRMAN YOUNG: Pardon me? And that, of course, is a problem in that we have asked for an invitation. India is the only democratic country of which we're aware that has not extended an invitation for the Commission to visit, and we would welcome that invitation. The government [of India] has said that in some respects, things are not as bad as they appear in the media. And they also tell us that the government is making efforts. We would be delighted to be able to observe some of those firsthand and converse with the government more directly about it, but we've not had an invitation, despite repeated requests.

MR. DENIG: Okay. Let's go to the first row, here.

QUESTION: Dubravka Savic, Belgrade Daily, Vechernje Novosti.

More than 100 monasteries and churches in the province of Kosovo, Orthodox Christians' monasteries and churches where destroyed, some of them during the, you know, presence of the international forces, including Americans. And some of these churches are old, like from 13th century.

Do you foresee any action to protect these cultural monuments and overall freedom, religious freedom of people, of minorities in Kosovo?

CHAIRMAN YOUNG: Well, it's a very good question. We have urged in the middle of, and subsequent to, the conflict that particular attention be paid to freedom of religion. Religion seemed to play a central role in the conflict itself, and therefore the protection of religion became all the more important in that context.

It is not our business to sort of protect monasteries as cultural heritage, but we certainly argued very strongly that all churches should not be destroyed; people should be permitted to worship in those churches; and that freedom of religion was a central issue that ought to be protected. There was a period in which that did seem to be getting better. Concerns have been expressed and it is back on the agenda for our commission to look at more in the future.

MR. DENIG: Okay. Let's go to the gentleman in the way back, please.

QUESTION: Kyu Lee from Radio Free Asia. Is there any new development in North Korea in terms of religious freedom? And would you recommend this issue to be mentioned or discussed in upcoming six-party talks?

MR. YOUNG: The answer to the first part of your question is no. We have seen absolutely no expansion of the right to worship freely in North Korea of any sort. It remains, in that regard, one of the most oppressive, if not the most oppressive regime in the world. The stories that come out of North Korea, largely through the refugees, are hair-raising. They are horrific. And there's no evidence that it's getting better at all.

And yes, our Commission has formally recommended that the issue of human rights be part of the six-party talks. It seems to us a serious mistake to not have issues of freedom of religion, conscience, thought and belief on the agenda.

Indeed, one of the geniuses of the Helsinki Process, under the auspices of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, was that, in fact, they talked about security issues under one basket, they talked about economic and other issues under a second basket and then a third basket had human rights.

And while each proceeded autonomously within its own basket, there were relationships between all three. And that, in the end, turned out to be enormously effective and powerful and useful to all the countries involved.

So we have strongly urged the United States Government to keep issues of religious liberty on the agenda for any six-party talks and we've encouraged the Chinese, the Japanese and all governments to do that as well.

MR. DENIG: Okay. Let's take the gentleman in the middle in the black and white shirt.

QUESTION: Emad Mekay with Inter Press Service and also with the Al-Sharq Al-Awsat Newspaper, Saudi Arabia.

Sir, since our topic is religion, I was wondering if you could please give us a brief description of your Commission and the religions of members of the committee: how many Muslims are there, how many Jews, how many Christians. And also, do you only look at what foreign countries do to their minorities or what some secular governments do to their own religious majorities? For example, there are some schools in the Middle East that, Muslim schools that ban women from wearing their headscarf, even though they are in Muslim countries. I mean, are you looking at those?

And finally, are you at all aware that some mosques in the United States of America have complained that they are being monitored; they are being listened to by the security apparatus here? Does that come under your jurisdiction, and do you have a say on what happens here? Thank you.

MR. YOUNG: Let me see if I can answer your questions. If I forget, come back and remind me again. Let me take the third part, third question first, which is, our statutory mandate is exclusively international.

There are a large number of human rights groups in the United States that monitor domestic U.S. developments. In fact, if you look at Human Rights Watch and ask what three countries have they written the most reports on, by far, China is first, Israel is second and the United States is third. So there's no lack of attention within the United States to issues of this sort.

And human rights groups ranging from Human Rights Watch to the ACLU and so on do monitor. And there are entities within the U.S. Government as well. The Civil Rights division of the Department of Justice, of course, has been one of the most effective advocates for equal rights in the United States for the past 50 years. But that's not our statutory mandate. We are not permitted to opine or examine domestic developments.

Then the other question, as I understand it is: Do we look not only at how a minority is treated within a country, but also how the majority is treated? Absolutely.

Our principle point is to focus on the international human rights documents, which provide an individual right, not simply the right of a group to worship, but individuals within that group to have any belief system that they want. Now, it doesn't mean that a group has to accept them. They may be expelled from the group if they don't adhere to that group's standards. But what the international human rights documents are clear about is you can suffer no disadvantage for that expulsion. You cannot be stoned. You cannot be discriminated against in your job. You cannot lose your land or your property. And that much is very clear. So we have focused very much on freedom of religion.

In the case of China, for example, it's not necessarily looking at minorities; it's looking at all religious groups. In the case of India, it may be looking at a particular religious group that seems particularly disadvantaged, but it varies from country to country. But in all cases the question is providing religious rights for individuals, whether they are part of a majority religion or minority religion.

And in that regard, for example, we have actually criticized, last week, rather severely, the French for prohibiting headscarves and other displays of religious symbolism, including the yarmulke and the crosses and head scarves and the turbans as violative of the French's international obligations. And so we've been very clear about that.

We also look predominantly at what a government does in terms of its repression of religions or what it fails to do in stopping one religious group or one group from persecuting another group.

We have championed the cause of Hindus, of Muslims, of Bahais, of Christians, of Jews all over the world. And so, in that sense, it really is looking at the way in which an individual has the capacity to worship.

The last question is: What religions do we represent? Let me be clear about the fact that we do not represent any religions on the Commission. We are appointed for two-year terms: Three are appointed by the President, three are appointed by the leadership of the House of Representatives and three by the leadership of the Senate. And we serve for two-year terms. We may be reappointed, in many cases are not reappointed. So we've had a fairly broad array, and the Commission at the moment has, let's see, I happen to be a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, we have a Hindu, let's see, we have a Muslim, we have three Catholics, I believe. What am I forgetting? Protestant, Southern Baptist.

QUESTION: Jewish.

MR. YOUNG: Pardon me?

QUESTION: Jewish.

MR. YOUNG: Yeah, and three Jews. Oh, no, two -- one -- and one -- and one of the Jewish faith.

In the past, we have also had a Bahai, we have had a Coptic Christian -- I'm not quite sure how to describe Langley. So it's been all over the lot. And generally speaking, it has been our experience that people are appointed without regard to their religious affiliation, that that has not been terribly relevant in the appointment process.

MR. DENIG: Let's go back to India here, please.

QUESTION: KP Nayar from the Telegraph again.

Put yourself in Secretary Powell's shoes for a moment.

CHAIRMAN YOUNG: Thank you. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: In view of the lack of unanimity within the Commission on designating India as a CPC, wouldn't you, as a diplomat and a general, consider it more prudent to leave things as they are?

MR. YOUNG: Well, let me say I hope he's not acting as a general; I hope he's acting as a diplomat. We have a very clear separation of powers in our country, and I seriously hope he is operating as a Secretary of State and not as a general, despite his past experience in that regard.

I, personally, would not designate [India] because that is the view that I

articulated, on the one hand. On the other hand, I think that my fellow commissioners make a terribly powerful case that the government has not only not distanced itself enough from these attacks but, in fact, has engaged itself in that kind of incendiary rhetoric that has, in fact, encouraged that; and that India is a close friend and ally of the United States, which gives us an opportunity to engage them more deeply.

Designation as a Country of Particular Concern does not require sanctions and so forth. It requires that the Secretary pay attention. It requires that the Secretary engage that country and enter into some understanding of things that will be done that will rectify that.

And I would think if I were Secretary it would be both strategically, as well as tactically I suppose, but strategically, morally, and geopolitically right, to pay that kind of attention and to work in that relationship with India, and I would do that.

MR. DENIG: Okay. Let's take the gentleman right here.

QUESTION: Yeah, John Sicililiano with the Saudi Press Agency. I was just wondering, how does human rights -- how does human rights fall in the -- when examining or looking at the U.S. initiatives, the Middle East Partnership Initiative? I know that the report the committee puts out does describe the problems, but is -- the initiatives, the U.S. initiatives, and there talk of emerging with the G-7 as far as the Greater Middle East Initiative. How does these things fall in line with what your committee is pointing out, but greater than, I guess, seeking some kind of resolution or resolvment of some of these problems?

MR. YOUNG: Well, we are supporters of the Middle East Initiative, as evidenced by the fact that we are dismayed that Saudi Arabia is not part of that; and that we think the situation in Saudi Arabia clearly suggests that it ought to be one of the countries that's included in that initiative. That's a laudatory initiative. We have long urged on our Commission, in a variety of different ways, international cooperation on these matters, and I believe have been most effective when we've been able to get international cooperation on them.

So from those two perspectives, it would be something we would applaud. We have also urged that the Middle East Initiative contain a strong component of human rights in it. It doesn't make sense if it doesn't. In fact, to create societies in which the -- the true genius and power of the people in those countries can be unleashed requires those countries to allow those people to think and to talk and to believe as they will, and within the bounds public order, to act as they would. And that's precisely what the Middle East Initiative is about, and that's why we think it is a good thing but human rights, indeed, have to be central to that initiative. And countries, at least

in the case of Saudi Arabia, that aren't included, should be included as well.

MR. DENIG: Okay. Let's take the lady in the middle, please.

QUESTION: Hi, I'm [Stephanie Ho] with the Voice of America. I just wanted to ask about the countries that weren't named by the State Department. I guess it was Eritrea, India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkmenistan and Vietnam that the Commission is singling out for -- recommending should be a CPC.

I just wondering, in your opinion, why are they not being named by the State Department? And is this the first time these countries have come up? I mean, you've already talked about Saudi Arabia, but I was curious about the other countries as well.

MR. YOUNG: Well, for most of these countries, this is not the first time that these countries have come up. Saudi Arabia is one we have mentioned before. Turkmenistan is a country that we have mentioned before. I think it fair to say the situation in Turkmenistan is probably getting worse and it's more deserving of the designation this year than even last year, but it richly deserved it last year. Indeed, the totality of repression of human rights in Turkmenistan is appalling, and attention just simply has to be paid to that.

Vietnam is a country that we have opined about before. Again, it's a country in which the U.S. Ambassador for Religious Freedom indicated that he had spent a considerable amount of time, but testified last week that in the 18 months in which he had been on the job the situation had deteriorated. We are monitoring increasing attempts and getting credible reports of attempts of forced renunciation of religious belief against the Montagnards up in the central highlands. There have been more church closings. Father Lee remains in prison for the only crime of offering to give testimony to our Commission.

That kind of repression really deserves serious attention, and this is the right time to do that. Our trade with Vietnam this year will probably approach \$6 billion. We have a deepening relationship with it. Nevertheless, Vietnam continues to block American broadcasts into Vietnam. It is appalling that an American ally with which we are working to expand trade with that degree of attention won't allow information about America, about these issues, to go freely into the country. Those kinds of things really do deserve serious attention.

Eritrea is another country where the situation is deteriorating, and I think the same can be said of Pakistan.

QUESTION: I'm sorry. But, so why do you think they haven't been named? And are you confident that maybe these countries will be named this time when the report comes out at the end of the year?

MR. YOUNG: Well, I already was happily elevated to the position of Secretary of State, and as soon as that formally happens they will be named. (Laughter.) But, at the moment, the Secretary doesn't always seem to agree with me on these matters.

I won't speak on behalf of the State Department. I mean, I will simply say that I think they're wrong. We have said publicly we think they're wrong. These should be designated. I'm sure there's different reasons that might be offered for each country. I won't speculate on those, but invite you to ask Mr. Boucher that question.

These are countries that clearly meet the statutory definition and should be objects of very special attention. We think that is deeply in the United States' interest, but we also think it's in the interest of the people in those countries, as well as the global community at large.

MR. DENIG: Yes, the gentleman in the back.

QUESTION: I'm also from Voice of America, [Huchen Zhang].

You mentioned that the Commission has never been to China itself, but Hong Kong. My question is how receptive or how cooperative the Chinese Government is to the Commission's work, and do you plan to visit China any time soon?

MR. YOUNG: We would like to visit China. We have had serious negotiations with the Chinese Government on two separate trips, both of which were eventually made impossible by the conditions that the Chinese Government laid down. And so we have been distressed and unhappy about that.

We would like to visit China.
The Chinese Government tells us that we don't fully understand the situation, we ought to come and see. That's precisely the invitation we'd like. We'd like an invitation to come, without conditions, to see. And in that regard, we

certainly would listen carefully, as we always do, to all sides of the story. And so we would like to go to China and we think that kind of an invitation is really a minimal invitation if the Chinese Government really mean what they say, which is to come see, and that perhaps we have it wrong. We don't believe we have it wrong, but an invitation would help, certainly help us study that in more detail and speak with a broader range of people to confirm that.

We have appreciated the opportunities to talk with the Chinese Government about it on a number of different occasions, predominantly here in the United States, and that is at least part of the problem.

MR. DENIG: Is there a final question?

(No response.)

MR. DENIG: Okay. In that case, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

MR. YOUNG: Thank you very much.

(end transcript)